

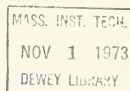




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THE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING'S AFFECTIVE QUALITIES  
ON CONSUMER RESPONSE\*

682-73

Alvin J. Silk\*\* and Terry G. Vavra\*\*\*

September, 1973

MASSACHUSETTS  
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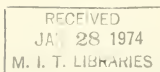
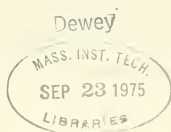
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## ABSTRACT

The subject of "pleasant" and "irritating" advertising has a long history of controversy involving issues of both management and public policy. Advertising practitioners and researchers have debated about the existence and/or the nature of the relationship between consumers' affective reactions to advertising materials and its effectiveness in altering attitudes or behavior toward the product advertised. The paper presents a review of viewpoints that have been expressed in the advertising literature on the question of how consumers' liking or disliking of advertising messages is related to the ability of advertising to achieve its intended commercial purposes. Out of this emerges what amounts to two different theories about the process and effects of pleasant and unpleasant advertising. Next, empirical evidence available from advertising research is examined and found to be equivocal. A laboratory experiment undertaken to test a series of hypotheses concerning the effects of "hard" and "soft sell" radio commercials on various hierarchical measures of consumer response is briefly discussed to illustrate how microtheoretical notions from communications research can be applied in this area.



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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the question of how the persuasive impact of advertisements is influenced by the nature of the affective reactions which advertising stimuli evoke among mass media audiences. If only because advertising is fundamentally an intrusive element in their lives, it is inevitable that consumers will find certain kinds of advertising more acceptable or appealing than others. Advertisers in their perpetual search for better ways to achieve their communication objectives have long been interested in such reactions. Ratings of the "likability" of advertising materials are regularly obtained in copy testing and related types of studies (e.g. Barban, 1969). However, what normative implications and value to attach to such measurements are among advertising's oldest and most controversial subjects. Can an "irritating" commercial be more effective than a "pleasant" one? Is it necessary for an ad to be "liked" by consumers in order for it to influence their purchasing behavior? Do "positive" advertising appeals have any inherent advantage over "negative" ones? Such questions commonly arise in the context of managing advertising campaigns, but they also have a broader significance. Greyser (1973, p. 3) has recently pointed out that public criticism of the use of "irritating" advertising may well make this matter "the next public policy battleground for advertisers." Interestingly, Greyser and Reece (1971, p. 159) found that in a survey of businessmen's attitudes toward advertising, respondents were about equally divided in their opinions as to whether or not the most effective TV commercials are also the most annoying.



Over the years a great many studies have been done on the general subject of consumers' attitudes toward advertising. Much of this work has focused on public opinion of advertising as a social institution which Greyser and Bauer (1966) conclude has remained "remarkably stable" over the past three to four decades. Attention has also been given to what consumers like and don't like about advertising practices and techniques. Lazarsfeld's post war research on radio (1946, 1948) and Steiner's work on television (1963, 1966) provide a good deal of information about audience satisfactions and dissatisfactions with broadcast commercials. The most comprehensive and recent investigation in this tradition is the study sponsored by the American Association of Advertising Agencies and reported in Bauer and Greyser's volume, Advertising in America: The Consumer View (1968). This research offers much valuable insight and a vast amount of data about both consumers' overall judgements of advertising as a social institution and their reactions to specific advertising messages appearing in the major media. Thus, a considerable amount of knowledge has been developed about what consumers find favorable and unfavorable about advertising. By comparison, the matter of how these reactions alter the persuasive impact of advertising appears to have received much less systematic study. As McGuire (1969, p. 192) remarked in reviewing social psychological research on a related subject, it might, at first glance, appear unobjectionable to hypothesize that liking and effectiveness are related in a straightforward positive fashion. It turns out, however, that this proposition has not been uniformly accepted in advertising circles, and in fact, a quite well developed opposing point of view has also been put forth.

The plan of the paper is as follows. First we present a summary and analysis of the viewpoints that have been expressed in the advertising





literature concerning the relationship between consumers' affective reactions toward advertising stimuli and its persuasive impact. We identify two conflicting theories about this process and note the key unresolved issues. Next, relevant empirical studies found in the advertising research literature are reviewed. A laboratory experiment undertaken to test a set of hypotheses concerning the effects of "hard" and "soft" sell radio commercials is briefly discussed in the last section of the paper. Finally, some comments are made concerning further work in this area.

### ADVERTISING THEORIES AND VIEWPOINTS

Advertising literature is replete with moralizing, equivocation, and conflicting speculation on the subject of how affective reactions to advertisements are related to the ability of advertising stimuli to achieve their intended commercial purposes. A careful reading of what has been written by various advertising psychologists and practitioners over the years reveals what amounts to two different and competing theories. One school of thought maintains that a curvilinear relationship exists between effectiveness and affective reaction: the greater the liking or disliking of the commercial message, the greater its impact. The other point of view holds that the relationship is a positive monotonic one: that advertising which evokes "pleasant" or favorable reactions is more effective than advertising that "irritates" or elicits unpleasant feelings. The former position has been referred to as the "law of extremes," while the latter may be labelled as the "superiority-of-the-pleasant" thesis. Both views are examined in detail below.

#### The "Law of Extremes" Hypothesis

A number of authors have argued that liking and effectiveness are related in a curvilinear manner. The rationale put forth here is that



valence is less important than intensity of affective reactions. Hence, it has been claimed that either liked or disliked advertising is more effective than advertising which arouses an indifferent or emotionally neutral reaction. This notion came to be known as the "law of extremes" and has been frequently mentioned in advertising texts. For example, with reference to radio advertising, Wolfe recommended:

Plan your commercials around the law of extremes, making them either so entertaining that they create an immediate pleasurable response or so forceful, aggressive, and repetitious that they produce a momentarily unpleasant reaction (Wolfe, 1949, p. 482, emphasis added).

Lucas and Britt (1950, p. 380) also refer to this type of relationship in their chapter on broadcast advertising but appeared more reluctant than Wolfe to advocate its normative implications.

Occasionally in discussing this relationship, advertising writers (e.g., Britt, 1955) have noted that psychological research on emotion and memory indicates that both the intensity and quality of emotional factors influence memory (Rapaport, 1961). However, the person who appears to have been most influential in gaining acceptance for the concept of a "law of extremes" was Horace Schwerin. Both Wolfe (1949, p. 484) and Lucas and Britt (1950, p. 381) refer to research by Schwerin on the liking and remembering of radio commercials as the source of empirical support for this curvilinear relationship in advertising. Reproduced in both these works is a figure (credited to Schwerin) depicting a smooth J-shaped curve (that is very nearly U-shaped) relating "liking and remembrance."<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1 below.

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INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

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The history of the Schwerin "curve of remembrance" is of some interest. The December, 1955 issue of the Schwerin Research Corporation's Bulletin gives a brief account of its origins. During World War II, Horace Schwerin was involved in a study of commercials which urged G.I.'s to change their shoes daily. Soldiers' like/dislike reactions were first obtained for a large number of commercials. An experiment was then run wherein various commercials were exposed to different units. The commercials were broadcast in mess halls over public address systems that also carried other program material. A noteworthy feature of the research was the use of an unobtrusive measure of behavioral effect to assess the differential impact of the various commercials. The researchers entered the barracks while the G.I.'s were out on duty and placed an inconspicuous mark on the shoes that had been left behind. The day after the commercial had been broadcast, a check was made to see what proportion of the soldiers had followed the message's recommendations and actually changed their shoes. According to the Bulletin, the findings showed that "both the well liked and the disliked messages were more effective than the indifferently received ones, with the liked apparently having somewhat of an edge" (Schwerin Research Corporation, 1955, p. 3). The familiar J-shaped curve was presented with the axes labelled "liking for 'G.I.' Commercials" and "% Changing Shoes." The Bulletin's account of the study notes that the commercials were divided into three groups based on the pre-test liking ratings ("well liked, disliked, indifferently received") and this classification was used in assigning treatments to subject groups. This would seem to imply that the much discussed smooth J-shaped curve was interpolated from data on only three levels of liking ratings.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the document describing Schwerin's subsequent research which presumably demonstrated that the same curvilinear relationship also



held for the liking and remembering of regular radio commercials is no longer available.<sup>3</sup>

The idea that attention value and remembering may increase with disliking has considerable common sense appeal. Drawing audience attention to advertising is not easily accomplished. The problem is especially difficult for broadcast media where large portions of the audience engage in other activities while viewing and/or listening. Steiner's (1966) observational study of television viewing behavior showed that less than half the audience paid full attention to commercials. Recently, Bither (1972), Gardner (1970) and Venkatesan and Haaland (1968) have conducted studies where the audience's attention has been manipulated or distracted away from the advertising message. The results indicate that learning and recall are sensitive to distraction. The intrusiveness of advertising is one of the most common complaints registered about it. Bauer and Greyser (1968, p. 244) found that this factor was mentioned for 63 percent of all radio advertising judged annoying by consumers and for 46 percent of all television commercials so classified. One can imagine tabulations of reasons why audiences find advertising annoying or unpleasant serving as a basis for developing a checklist of attention-getting techniques.

The rationale for the law of extremes noted in the above discussion emphasizes attention and remembering as response criteria. Subsequent stages in the response process also had to be taken into account. The critical assumption made in this regard was that any negative feelings aroused by irritating advertising will be either only momentary or at worst, directed toward the advertising but not associated with the advertised product, at least by the time of purchase (Wolfe, 1949, pp. 549-550; Devoe, 1956, p. 485). Evidence of a similar process has been found in





research on the over time pattern of effects of communications from sources of high and low credibility. Studies by Hovland and Weiss (1951) and Kelman and Hovland (1953) suggest that with the passage of time, the likelihood of spontaneously associating content of a communication with its source tends to decline. The operation of such a mechanism is crucial to the case made for a law of extremes because as one of its chief proponents pointed out, it serves "to explain how a 'disliked' commercial can avoid doing more harm than good" (Wolfe, 1949, p. 485). Thus it has been argued that irritating techniques facilitate attention and memory and the benefits of such learning will persist until the time of purchase because with the passage of time there is a tendency to disassociate the advertisement from the product advertised.

The proponents of the curvilinear hypothesis typically recognized that there were likely to be some sorts of limits on the types and range of dislike or unpleasantness over which commercially positive or desirable effects could be obtained. Wolfe (1949) cautioned against being "blatantly insulting" and stressed that irritating commercials had to be "skillfully planned." He was willing to concede that "while irritation advertising can sell goods, it cannot sell goodwill for the sponsor" (Wolfe, 1949, p. 487). Significantly, authors like Wolfe do not seem to have considered how repeated exposure to unpleasant advertisements might alter these relationships. This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that repetition is an integral part of the irritation technique. As will be discussed in a later section, there are reasons for expecting that repetition reduces the likelihood of the advertised product being disassociated from its advertising.

The Superiority of the Pleasant Hypothesis

The merit of emphasizing "positive" as opposed to "negative" appeals, and thereby arousing pleasant rather unpleasant "feeling tone" was one of



the prime concerns of those who pioneered the field of advertising psychology. Most appear to have favored the former approach over the latter (Lucas and Benson, 1929). This point of view managed to persist despite much controversy. The arguments offered to support it have tended to shift over the years in response to the challenge posed by the law of extremes hypothesis.

A rationale frequently mentioned for the superiority of the pleasant thesis is the proposition that pleasant experiences are better remembered than unpleasant ones. To support this contention, advertising psychologists have sometimes appealed to the Freudian notion of repression (active forgetting of unpleasant experiences) or Thorndike's "law of effect" (connections between a stimulus and a response are strengthened or "stamped in" by satisfying experiences and weakened or "stamped out" by unpleasant or annoying ones) (Hattwick, 1950, p. 247; Poffenberger, 1932, p. 363). Other advocates of the superiority of the pleasant thesis appear to have viewed the relationship between affect and remembering as U- or J-shaped rather than as a simple positive monotonic one. That is, in some of these discussions it was acknowledged that psychological research indicates that memory is related to both intensity and direction of affect (Rapaport, 1961). However, this idea was typically discounted by stressing that although unpleasant ads are better than neutral ones, pleasant ads are best of all (Hattwick, 1950, p. 248; Britt, 1955, p. 32). Aside from the fact that experimental results do not justify any such simple generalization (Kanungo and Dutta, 1966), the hazards of making the leap from psychological theory to advertising practice were not explicitly considered.

Moving to the acceptance or attitude change level of response, we find another line of reasoning has been put forth to support the proposition



that pleasant advertising is more effective than the opposite variety. Here it is argued that the favorable or unfavorable affect consumers experience as a result of the advertising will be transferred or carried over to the product advertised (Strong, 1925, p. 276). If the consumer dislikes the advertising, so the argument runs, then he will tend to dislike the product advertised and may refuse to purchase it. Weschler, in taking a strong stand against the law of extremes, argued as follows:

Psychological testing, common sense, and logical thinking all convince us that there is no dis-association in the listeners' mind between their dislike of the commercial message itself and of the product advertised. On the contrary, it is accepted fact that emotions, pleasant or unpleasant, tend to become associated with the total situation in which they are experienced and with all of the parts which make up that situation (Wechsler, 1945, pp. 36-37).

Here we see an explicit rejection of the advertising-product dis-sociation hypothesis espoused by proponents of the law of extremes.

#### Immediate Versus Delayed Effects

The major point on which the two theories are clearly contradictory involves the question of whether or not affective reactions aroused by an advertising treatment are transferred to the product featured in the advertisement. Drawing upon concepts from attitude change research which point to the importance of distinguishing between immediate and delayed effects of a communication, we can identify a possible basis for reconciling the seemingly conflicting views held on this matter. More specifically, we suggest that there are grounds for expecting the superiority of the pleasant hypothesis to hold for measures of attitude change taken immediately after exposure while the law of extremes hypothesis should apply to delayed measures of persuasive impact.

Research on source credibility and the sleeper effect (e.g., Hovland



and Weiss, 1951; Kelman and Hovland, 1953) suggests that the elapsed time between exposure and measurement may be a critical factor for the problem under consideration here. For the purposes at hand, the basic ideas may be described as follows: as the interval from exposure to measurement lengthens, the tendency for the communication source and content not to be spontaneously associated increases, giving rise to different patterns of attitude change over time for high and low credibility sources.

It would seem reasonable to predict that immediately after exposure, the opportunity for feelings evoked by an advertisement to carry-over or influence product attitudes is maximal. At that time, the persuasive impact of an advertisement should be enhanced by its pleasantness or likability but adversely affected by unpleasantness and dislike, an outcome that would conform with the superiority of the pleasant hypothesis. In his review of attitude change research on liking and persuasion, McGuire (1969, pp. 192-193) notes that most consistency theories would predict a positive relationship between these two variables and he cites some empirical support for such. However, if a dissociation process similar to that posited for the sleeper effect begins to operate as time since exposure increases, then spontaneous connections between product and advertising become less likely and the initial advantage of pleasant advertising over unpleasant advertising should be reduced or removed entirely--a result compatible with the law of extremes hypothesis.

The meaning and empirical status of the sleeper effect hypothesis have recently been subjected to some critical re-analyses. Gillig and Greenwald (1972) and Capon and Hulbert (1973) have pointed out that various conceptions of what constitutes a sleeper effect have been employed in past studies of the phenomenon. The sleeper effect was originally





defined as a delayed increase in the persuasive impact of a communication from a source low in credibility. Such a result contrasted with the decrease over time generally observed for the effect of a message from a source high in credibility.. Combining these two patterns would show that whereas the impact of the high credibility source was greater than the low credibility source immediately after exposure, this difference in effectiveness would decline or even disappear altogether with the passage of time (Hovland and Weiss, 1952; Kelman and Hovland, 1953). As research in this area progressed, the empirical criterion of the sleeper effect shifted from the original notion of a delayed increase in the persuasive impact of a low credibility source to that of an interaction effect between source credibility (high versus low) and time of the post-exposure measure (immediate versus delayed) (e.g., Watts and McGuire, 1964). Various over time patterns of effect of high and low credibility sources could satisfy the latter criterion but would be inconsistent with the former (Capon and Hulbert, 1973). In fact, Greenwald and Gillig (1971, p. 7) contend that, "There is no published report of a sleeper effect in which the increase in opinion from an immediate to a delayed posttest is statistically reliable."<sup>4</sup> They go on to point out that evidence from previous studies as well as that developed in a series of experiments they conducted indicates that, "There is a significant interaction between source credibility and time of opinion posttest, but this interaction is almost totally dependent on the loss of effect of the high-credible source, not an increase in effect of the low-credible source."

The explanation generally offered for the sleeper effect is that as the time since exposure increases, the content of a communication is less



likely to be spontaneously associated with its source (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, 1953, p. 255; McGuire, 1969, p. 259).<sup>5</sup> It is important to recognize that this dissociation hypothesis does not imply that the persuasive impact of a low credibility source will necessarily increase over time (Gillig and Greenwald, 1972). The type of interaction noted above, which Greenwald and Gillig (1971) suggest is reliable, can also be accounted for by the dissociation hypothesis. If processes like this "revised" sleeper effect and dissociation phenomena operate in the case of consumer response to pleasant and unpleasant advertising, then we would expect to find that the nature of the liking-effectiveness relationship would be different for immediate and delayed measures of effect. Delayed measures are of greater significance to advertisers than immediate post-exposure ones inasmuch as some period of time ordinarily lapses between exposure to advertising and the occasion of purchase when product perceptions and attitudes become activated.

### The Effects of Repetition

It would appear that making the distinction between immediate and delayed response allows us to argue that the law of extremes and the superiority of the pleasant hypotheses are not necessarily incompatible only with reference to effects predicted after a single exposure. Repeated exposure to the same message makes the picture more complicated.

Some have suggested or implied that repeated exposure to irritating advertising will increase the likelihood of adverse reactions to the advertising being transferred to the advertised product (Hepner, 1964, pp. 430-431; Seehafer and Laemmar, 1959, p. 236). Weinberger (1961) has expressed the view that the sleeper effect is not likely to occur in advertising situations because repeated exposure to the same advertisement will diminish the tendency for a product to be disassociated from its



advertising. Subsequent exposures should serve to reinforce the affective reaction elicited by the initial exposure and thereby increase spontaneous association of a product with its advertising. Such an occurrence would be consistent with the results from Kelman and Hovland's (1953) study of source effects which demonstrated that a "reinstatement" of the source at the time of a delayed measurement of opinion change counteracted the sleeper effect. That is, when subjects were reminded of the communication source (but not re-exposed to its content) some time after the first exposure, there was a persistence of a significant source effect similar to that observed immediately after the original exposure.

Repetition may involve still other processes about which there is some disagreement. Weiss (1966) cites evidence from psychological research to support his suggestion that under conditions of "low motivation to buy or learn" (which would be expected for broadcast advertising of package goods - Krugman, 1967), attention diminishes with repetition. He also suggests that "repeated presentation of an emotionally provocative stimulus leads to a kind of affective adaptation and reduction of arousal" and notes that "this kind of neutralizing of affective properties occurs whether the affect initially aroused is positive or negative" (Weiss, 1966, p. 421). Hence, such affective adaptation might operate to reduce the magnitude of the "source reinstatement" effect brought about by repetition.

Others have expressed a somewhat different view from that put forth by Weiss. Krugman (1961) conjectured that "soft sell" television commercials benefit more from repetition than the "hard sell" variety. Weilbacher (1970) argues that repetition produces different "life cycles" for advertisements, depending upon the nature of their affective quality. Specifically, he (p. 221) hypothesizes that whereas "the informativeness



and entertainment of a particular advertising communication may be, at best, transitory and short lived" but "annoyance and offense in advertising is inherently cumulative." The fact that repetition is typically near the top of the list of reasons consumers most frequently mention for finding broadcast advertising annoying (e.g., Bauer and Greyser, 1968) would seem to be consistent with the latter hypothesis. Controlled studies of the influence of repetition on the affectivity of advertising stimuli are conspicuously absent in the available literature. Grass and Wallace (1969) have reported data from a field study which indicated that the favorability of attitudes toward a set of television commercials that were initially well-liked declined somewhat over the course of a year-long campaign in which the commercials were repeated.

Sawyer's review of the psychological research on repetition that appears elsewhere in this volume identifies some additional areas of complexity. Grounds for resolving the issues noted here would seem to be presently lacking.

In summary then, we find in the advertising literature two competing theories about the relationship between advertising affect and its persuasive impact. The question of whether the relationship is curvilinear or a monotonic increasing one has been the subject of considerable previous debate. These two points of view have never been precisely formulated, and several key matters are left ambiguous. The concept of affect has not been clearly defined in either theoretical or operational terms. There has been no explicit recognition of media differences. One might be tempted to suggest the superiority of the pleasant school of thought has merely focused its attention on a limited range of the more general curvilinear or J-shaped relationship advocated by the proponents of the law of extremes. However, such a simplistic attempt at integration would overlook the fact that the two theories





postulate quite different intervening processes at both the message attention/remembering and product attitude change or acceptance stages of communications response. Analysis of the problem from the point of view of attitude change research suggests that delayed reaction and repetition effects are likely to be critical factors affecting the advertising liking-persuasion relationship.

Thus far, the discussion has focused on theoretical perspectives and issues. We now consider what light the available empirical evidence can cast on the questions raised by the foregoing analysis. As will be evident from the review presented in the next section, the number of pertinent studies found in publicly available sources is limited. One suspects that much relevant data has been gathered in proprietary pre-testing studies but remains unanalyzed and outside the public domain.

#### EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF RESPONSE

Various pieces of evidence bearing on the relationship between the affective quality of advertisements and their persuasive impact are to be found in the published advertising research literature. In the foregoing discussion we saw that different views have been expressed about the nature of the intervening process that operates to link advertisement affect to effectiveness. Consequently, in examining empirical results we are especially interested in distinguishing among measures that relate to different stages or levels in the advertising response process. The "attention-comprehension-acceptance" framework of attitude change research provides a useful basis for organizing our review of the available research. Unfortunately, none of the studies uncovered measured more than one level of response. Given the nature of the material available, it will be convenient to consider first findings that relate to the attention-



comprehension phases (advertisement recognition and recall measures) which are grouped together under the heading of "reception." Regarding the acceptance stage, we discuss results based on attitudinal and behavioral measures of measures of response separately.

### Advertisement Reception

As noted previously, a number of advertising texts (Hepner, 1964, p. 431; Lucas and Britt, 1950, p. 381; Wolfe, 1949, p. 484) state that the Schwerin Corporation found in its studies of radio commercials that liking and remembering were related in a manner similar to that represented by the J-shaped curve which Horace Schwerin employed to describe the relationship between soldiers' liking of messages broadcast in mess halls and their persuasion impact measured in terms of the extent to which the soldiers actually engaged in the recommended behavior. Inasmuch as none of the details of this work appear to have been preserved, we must look to other sources for detailed evidence regarding the relationship between advertisement affect and attention or learning.

A subject which received a great deal of attention from the early advertising psychologists was the question of the relative value of "positive" and "negative" advertising appeals. The former type of stimuli was seen as creating a pleasant and the latter an unpleasant "feeling tone" among the audience. In 1929-30, Lucas and Benson (1929, 1930a, 1930b) published a series of studies on this topic. They defined a positive advertising appeal as one "directed toward the attainment of something which is desirable" while a negative appeal "aims toward the avoidance of an annoying or repulsive situation (Lucas and Benson, 1930c, p. 112). To illustrate the difference between the two approaches, they reproduced a pair of print ads for Pebecco tooth paste (Lucas and Benson, 1930c, pp. 113-114). One carried the headline "Admired everywhere--the radiant smile that shows



the Mouth of Youth" and featured an intimate scene between an attractive young couple. The other ad began with "I had six teeth pulled this morning" and showed a man holding his jaw in obvious discomfort.

One of the studies conducted by Lucas and Benson (1930a) consisted of a laboratory experiment. A group of 108 adult subjects were exposed for 45 seconds to each of 15 positive and 15 negative magazine ads matched with respect to size and the use of color but featuring 30 different products. Details were not reported concerning how the positive versus negative appeal distinctions were made. Unaided and then aided recall measures were obtained immediately after exposure to the entire set of ads.

Total recall scores were calculated for the two groups of ads by aggregating correct responses over ads and subjects. Differences were small and inconsistent across the two measures. The unaided recall measure for the negative appeal ads was six percent higher than that for the positive appeal ads, but the reverse was true for the aided recall data. Men and women appeared to react similarly. Lucas and Benson repeated the study with a hundred junior and senior high school students. Overall, the positive appeal ads were better recalled (on both the unaided and aided measures) than the negative appeal ads, but important sex and age interactions were evident. The recall differential appeared greater for junior as compared to senior high school students, and boys were more affected than girls.

A second study of interest here is that reported by Rudolph (1947). "Feeling tone" was one of several variables he examined in his analysis of factors affecting Starch recognition scores for some 2500 ads (one half page or larger) that had appeared in the Saturday Evening Post in the five year period between 1935 and 1939. Five judges rated the



feeling tone of the illustration contained in each ad by categorizing it as "pleasant", "neutral", or "unpleasant." Sets of three ads matched with respect to brand advertised and mechanical variables were then identified with each set containing one ad that fell into each of these three feeling tone categories. Recognition scores reflecting the percentage of issue readers claiming to have seen the illustration were then compared for ads possessing the conventional picture-caption-copy format. In each triplet, the recognition score for the neutral ads was taken as a reference value (100) and the scores for the pleasant and unpleasant ads were expressed as ratios to that base. Unfortunately, the only information presented was an "index of attention" obtained by averaging these ratios across all triplets studies. The exact number was not reported. The average attention index figures found for the pleasant, neutral, and unpleasant ads were 106.7, 100, and 114.4, respectively. Interestingly, the pattern of these results is the reverse of the J-shaped relationship suggested by Schwerin's law-of-extremes/curve-of-remembrance discussed earlier. A separate analysis was done for ads with a "comic strip" format. By their nature, none were "unpleasant" and hence the only comparison possible was between the pleasant and neutral categories. Pleasant ads scored higher than neutral ones with respect to both attention value (of illustrations) and copy readership.

A third study deserving mention in this section is that due to Wells (1964b). In the course of developing his "Emotional Quotient" (EQ) and "Reaction Profile" (RP) scales for pretesting print advertisements, Wells had respondents rate various ads using these instruments. For several different sets of advertisements, he has reported correlations between the average scores ads received on these scales and recall measures obtained from different samples at the time the ads were actually run. For





example, the correlation between EQ and Gallup and Robinson Proved Name Registration scores was found to be .59 ( $p < .05$ , one tail test) for eleven black and white ads for the same product (Wells, 1964b, p. 47). For twenty of the ads studied in the Advertising Research Foundation's Study of Print Advertising Rating Methods (PARM), the "attractiveness" items of the RP scale correlated .55 with recognition scores ( $p < .01$ , one tail test) and .31 ( $p > .05$ , one tail test) with recall scores (Wells, 1964a, p. 6).

Other analysis by Wells also indicated that recall can be affected by attractiveness-meaningfulness interactions. Eleven pairs of ads from the PARM study were examined, each pair matched according to their meaningfulness ratings. He notes that "In nine of these cases, the less attractive ad received the higher recall score in the PARM Study" and he adds that "This was true in spite of the fact that high attractiveness ratings generally went with high recall (Wells, 1964a, p. 8). The explanation suggested by Wells was that meaningfulness ratings are "contaminated" by an ad's attractiveness; respondents overestimate the meaningful of attractive ads and underestimate it for unattractive ads.

Clearly, no simple relationship between affect and attention or learning emerges consistently from these studies. If one is willing to infer a smooth curve from three data points, then Rudolph's findings for magazine advertisements which were derived from the largest of the three data bases can be viewed as a curvilinear relation and therefore partly in accord with the J-shaped liking-remembering curve which Schwerin reportedly found for radio commercials.

It might be argued that affect is likely to have a greater impact on memory for broadcast commercials than for print advertisements because broadcast media are more intrusive than print. As well, there is the



possibility that in a small sample of ads such as those studied by Lucas and Benson and Wells, the variance among ads with respect to affect is too limited to tap enough of both extremes of the positive-negative affect continuum where, according to Schwerin, the effects become pronounced. On the other hand, Wells' data indicate that liking-recall relations can be affected by other cognitive reactions as well. Given this possibility, correlational findings based on data aggregated over many ads tend to be highly ambiguous at best.

### Attitudinal Effects

As part of their television commercial testing procedure, the Schwerin Corporation routinely collected data pertaining to both the audience's "liking" of commercials and their impact--the latter being measured by the pre-post shift in preferences for the advertised products.<sup>6</sup> From time to time references to the relationship between these two measures were mentioned in the Bulletin published monthly for several years by the company. The November, 1962 issue summarized their findings as follows:

Research on more than 20,000 commercials indicates no observable relationship between liking and motivating effectiveness except at the extremes (Schwerin Research Corporation, 1962, p. 2).

This statement was accompanied by a bar chart which showed mean effectiveness index values of 133 for the "50 best liked" commercials, 100 for the "average" commercial, and 77 for the "50 least liked" commercials. While no details are given as to how the calculations were made, the above numbers, taken literally, shows that effectiveness increased monotonically with liking. As such, these data obviously contradict the notion of a "law of extremes" and a J-shaped liking-effectiveness relationship. It is interesting to note that certain other more disaggregated data reported by the Schwerin organization also indicated a monotonic rather than a curvilinear relation-



ship. For example, liking and effectiveness scores for eleven British catfood commercials were found to correlate .94 and non-linearities were not suggested by an accompanying scatter diagram (Schwerin Research Corporation, 1963, p. 2).

This is one of those rare instances in advertising research where something quite close to an independent replication study is available. As part of a larger investigation of attitudes toward advertising (commissioned by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising), the British Market Research Bureau (1967) tested a sample of one hundred television commercials using essentially the same procedures as those employed by Schwerin (Treasure and Joyce, 1967, p. 21). The commercials were produced by ten different agencies and had previously been aired on television. Five commercials were shown to different audiences at twenty theatre sessions. A total of 779 subjects participated in the study. The relationship between liking and effectiveness was examined at two levels. The first analysis took individual differences in liking into account. Respondents were grouped according to how much they liked the commercials and for each group an overall effectiveness score (total preference shifts for all commercials) was determined. The results indicated a fairly smooth positive relationship between liking and effectiveness. The second analysis was performed using mean liking and effectiveness scores for each commercial computed by averaging individual responses. The commercials were divided into quartiles based on their average liking scores and the mean value of the effectiveness measure was determined for each quartile. No clear relationship between liking and effectiveness was discernible.<sup>7</sup> While differences in the effectiveness measures among the liking quartiles were slight, the effectiveness measures tended to be lower for the best liked, and most disliked commercials suggesting an inverted U-shaped



liking-effectiveness relationship.

The fact that liking and effectiveness were positively correlated across individuals but no such relationship was found across commercials when the data were averaged over respondents draws attention to the heterogeneity of consumers' reactions to the same advertising material. Bauer and Greyser (1968, p. 12) observed the same phenomenon in their study of reactions to specific advertisements and emphasized that "One person's annoyance may be another's enjoyment." Inasmuch as both liking and effectiveness were measured via questionnaires administered on one occasion, the observed association between the two variables at the individual level may be largely the result of selective perception tendencies and common method variance. Correlations of this kind found in other studies are subject to a similar interpretation. Steadman (1969) found the favorability of respondents' attitudes toward the use of sexual illustrations in advertising to be strongly associated with their ability to recall correctly brand names of advertisements featuring such materials to which they had been exposed. Bauer and Greyser's data (1968, pp. 285-291) indicated that individuals who used a product and those who preferred a brand tended to be less likely to regard its ads as annoying or offensive and were more likely to regard them as informative and enjoyable.

The final study relevant here is one conducted by Daniel Yankelovich, Inc. (no date) for the ABC Radio Network. Seventy-five radio commercials representing a variety of presentation styles and product classes were presented in sets of eight to groups consisting of approximately fifty respondents. A total of 550 women and men participated. The commercials were aired without program context. Each commercial was rated on forty-six descriptive scales which a factor analysis revealed tapped eight dimensions





of consumers' perceptions. Respondents also indicated on a three point scale how much the commercials stimulated their interest in buying the advertised brands. Mean scores were calculated for each commercial on the "stimulation of buying interest" scale and the eight commercial perception variables, one of which was labelled, "offense and alienation of the listener." Cross tabulations were reported between the dichotomized buying interest measure (above or below average) and a threefold categorization of each of the eight factor scores (above average, average, and below average). All eight dimensions used to characterize the commercials were markedly associated with stimulation of buying interest. Commercials judged highest on "offense and alienation" tended to be below average in stimulating buying interest.

Compared to the findings for attention and memory measures, these results for commercial liking and product predispositions appear much more consistent. Except for the aggregate analysis from the British television study, all three bodies of data revealed positive affect-effective-ness relationships and hence do not support the notion of a law of extremes. It should be noted however, that on all of these studies, the post attitude measure was taken immediately after exposure. Hence, they would not reflect the sleeper effect phenomenon. Any confidence inspired by the apparent consistency of findings here must be tempered by the realization that all the evidence reviewed is basically correlational and therefore subject to the usual ambiguities concerning causal priorities. The latter caution would seem particularly germane in the present situation since, as noted previously, selective perception and common methods variance are plausible explanations for the commercial attitude-product attitude correlations observed in the studies reviewed. Given the nature of the design and modes of analysis employed in the Schwerin



and British studies, there is the possibility that the results reflect regression artifacts (Campbell and Clayton, 1961).

The studies considered thus far have been largely cross-sectional ones, where the relationship between advertisement affect and some criterion of effectiveness was examined within a sample of ads using measures averaged over many respondents. Such designs clearly limit one's ability to control or detect important interactions. For instance, there are indications that program environment-commercial affect interactions influence response to television commercials (Axelrod, 1963; Crane, 1964; Kennedy, 1971). An example of the kind of confounding of effects that can occur in aggregate data is provided by Wheatley and Oshikawa's (1970) recent experimental study of the effectiveness of positive and negative advertising appeals in changing attitudes toward life insurance. Subjects (college students) were exposed to written copy which emphasized either the favorable consequences of owning life insurance (positive appeal) or the undesirable results of not being insured (negative appeal). The messages were essentially similar in all other respects. Pre-testing indicated that students did perceive the stimuli as the experimenters intended. Attitudes toward life insurance were measured before and after exposure to the advertising material by six items loading heavily on the evaluative factor of the semantic differential. The overall results showed that the group receiving the negative appeal shifted their attitudes slightly more than those exposed to the positive appeal. Wheatley and Oshikawa's main interest was in testing two hypotheses about interactions between appeals and individual differences with respect to pre-exposure anxiety levels. The latter was measured by a psychological instrument administered at the end of the experiment. However, Wheatley and Oshikawa claim that the scale used taps an enduring anxiety trait.



and its measurement was not affected by exposure to the experimental stimuli. They predicted that among low anxiety subjects, the negative appeal would produce more attitude change than the positive appeal, while the reverse would hold for high anxiety subjects.

The results were in the direction predicted, but not uniformly significant. Stimulated by a suggestion made by Ray and Wilkie (1970), Wheatley (1971) undertook a reanalysis of the data for the negative appeal condition. In the course of examining the implications of social psychological research on fear appeals (Leventhal, 1970) for marketing communications, Ray and Wilkie noted there was reason to believe that product users would respond differently than non-users to anxiety-arousing messages. To test for this possibility, Wheatley re-ran his analysis of the negative appeal results so as to estimate the separate effects of both prior ownership and anxiety level on attitude change. When he did this, he found that anxiety level made virtually no difference but an ownership effect was discernible, being significant at the .10 level. It appeared that the attitude change induced by the negative appeal occurred primarily among non-owners. Insurance owners' attitudes were essentially unaltered by the negative appeal and anxiety level did not appear to affect response directly at all. It would have been interesting to see the results of a similar analysis of the positive appeal condition. The existence of such complexities serves to underscore the limitations of cross-sectional studies in this area.

#### Behavioral Measures

Our search of the literature turned up only two relevant studies where behavioral measures of response were employed. Coupon returns were used in one case and sales results in the other. The studies in question



were part of the series of investigations Lucas and Benson carried out many years ago concerning the relative effectiveness of positive and negative appeals.<sup>8</sup>

In one investigation (Lucas and Benson, 1929), coupon returns were compared for 117 pairs of print ads. Each pair contained one ad featuring a positive appeal, while the other utilized a negative appeal. The positive-negative appeals discriminations were checked for thirty of the ads by a panel of judges and practically no disagreements were uncovered. Each pair of positive and negative ads were for the same product and had appeared in the same magazine at about the same time of the year. The ad pairs were also matched with respect to such format variables as size, position, and the use of illustration, color, headlines, and text. The number of coupons returned in response to the positive and negative ads were compared for each matched pair separately. The overall results indicated no tendency whatsoever for one type of appeal to be more effective than the other: fifty-seven comparisons favored the positive appeal and exactly the same number favored the negative appeals--the other three cases were tied. Further analyses wherein the data were disaggregated by product category and magazine revealed no discrepancies from the above pattern of results.

Lucas and Benson's other study (1930b) was based on data from three different situations where both positive and negative appeals had been used and related sales information was available that permitted comparisons to be drawn. The first involved a correspondence school selling educational courses. Advertisements generated inquiries which were followed up by personal letters that led to some purchases. Sales traceable to specific ads were compared for twenty-eight pairs of print advertisements





matched with respect to format variables. For sixteen of the twenty-eight comparisons, better sales results were achieved with a positive appeal than with a negative one.

A field experiment conducted by the manufacturer of a proprietary medicine was the source of materials for a second case study. Campaigns (apparently in newspapers) using different appeals were tested for four months in different cities. Sales during the test period were compared with sales during the same period of the previous year. Positive and negative appeals were the bases of two of the campaigns tested. Sales increased 171 percent where the negative appeal was used while the positive appeal was accompanied by a 10 percent drop in sales. Lucas and Benson note that prior to the test, a group of "advertising experts" had rated the positive appeal as being superior to the negative one.

The third case described the experience of a mail order agency in selling a particular book. Although few details were presented, Lucas and Benson (1930b) reported that negative appeals were found to be more effective than positive approaches.

The conclusions Lucas and Benson drew from their series of studies were that no inherent advantage could be claimed for either approach, and that product differences and variability in response within each type of appeal needed to be recognized. Their findings were of considerable importance at the time they were published, because of widespread controversy surrounding the subject.

Overall, we find that the available empirical evidence can contribute little to clarifying much less resolving the basic issues surrounding the law-of-extremes versus the superiority-of-the-pleasant controversy. The only relationship appearing with any consistency was the monotonic one between commercial liking and product attitude, and as noted, several ambiguities surround those results. None of the studies included measures



for more than one level in the response process. Practically all the data discussed for attention and memory were for print ads, while the only materials uncovered measuring response at the attitudinal level dealt solely with broadcast commercials. The critical matters of delayed action and repetition effects appear to have received no attention at all. In the course of discussing this work brief mention was made in passing of several methodological problems. Perhaps the most basic difficulty here is the lack of precise definition and control of the independent variable in these studies. The crude judgmental classification of ads into "positive" versus "negative" or "pleasant" versus "unpleasant" groupings and the simple, one item "liking" scales we see employed in most of the above studies stand in sharp contrast with other evidence such as that obtained in factor analytic studies which indicates that consumers' perceptions of advertising stimuli is highly multidimensional (Leavitt, 1970; Daniel Yankelovich, Inc., no date; Wells, 1964b). Given such complexity, experimentation would seem to be called for. In the next section, a preliminary effort in this direction is reviewed.

#### AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF "SOFT SELL" AND "HARD SELL" RADIO COMMERCIALS

##### Hypotheses

The present authors conducted an experiment aimed at investigating some of the unresolved issues in this area (Silk and Vavra, forthcoming). The effects of a pleasant, "soft sell" radio commercial were compared with those of an irritating, "hard sell" commercial for the same brand. The following predictions were made with reference to the effects of one exposure:

1. Brand awareness and advertising recall should be greater for the hard sell commercial than the soft sell commercial.



2. Attitudes held toward the advertised brand should be the same for the hard and soft sell commercials when measured after a period of time has lapsed following exposure.
3. Brand preference for the advertised product should be greater for the hard sell commercial than for the soft sell commercial when measured after a period of time has lapsed following exposure.

The rationale for the first prediction was that the features of the hard sell commercial which made it irritating would result in greater attention and remembering than the subtle mood technique of the soft sell commercial. The second hypothesis was derived from the assumption that the dissociation process suggested by attitude change research on the sleeper effect would be operative here. The final prediction followed from the first two. Given that the hard sell commercial would attract more attention and produce more learning and remembering and at the same time not suffer any adverse effects through unfavorable reactions to the commercial being transferred to the product, then the hard sell commercial should produce more frequent selection of the advertised product as the preferred brand than the soft sell commercial. In addition to testing the above hypotheses regarding the effects of a single exposure, a two exposure condition was added to the design for both the hard and soft sell commercials. Given the unsettled questions noted earlier regarding the various possible ways that repetition might influence liking-effectiveness relationships, there was no basis for formulating any unequivocal hypotheses about the comparative effectiveness of two exposures to hard and soft sell advertising. The only predictions that could be entertained here were that for either type of commercial, awareness and remembering measures should be greater after two exposures as compared to one.



## Method

Two radio commercials were specially prepared for use in the experiment. The objective was to create two commercials which would evoke quite opposite types of affective reaction but which otherwise would be as similar as possible. In an attempt to accomplish this, we deliberately incorporated into the commercials certain features which previous studies of attitudes toward radio commercials had indicated were among the most frequently mentioned sources of consumers' favorable and unfavorable reactions. The result was two presentations whose differences in style are best conveyed by the phrases, "hard sell" and "soft sell." The hard sell presentation featured an announcer with a harsh voice and an aggressive, feverish delivery and used some extraneous sound effects to dramatize the copy. In contrast, the soft sell commercial presented an announcer with a calm, soothing voice against a background of subdued music. The two commercials were identical in other essential respects such as copy theme, claims made, frequency of mention of brand name, length (one minute), and loudness. The final tapes were prepared by announcers, recording technicians, and producers with prior professional experience who, at the time, were associated with the Theatre Arts Department of the University of California, Los Angeles. The product featured in the commercials was an established (but not the leading) brand of shoe polish. The desiderata in choosing the advertised product were that it be salient to the consumption patterns of our subjects (male undergraduates) but not the object of deeply entrenched existing attitudes which would make it difficult for the commercial to achieve any detectable effect after only one or two exposures.

To establish that the commercials were, in fact, perceived to be different in a manner consistent with our expectations, they were exposed





to a sample of ninety male undergraduates drawn from the same general population as the subjects employed in the subsequent experiment. The order in which the commercials were presented to subjects was systematically rotated to balance order effects. After hearing each commercial, subjects rated it on Wells' (1964b) Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Reaction Profile (RP) scales.<sup>9</sup> Marked differences were found between the two commercials on both scales. The mean ratings for the pleasant, soft sell commercial were more positive than those for the irritating, hard sell commercial on all twelve EQ items and for ten of the twelve RP items--the two reversals were for "new, different-common, ordinary" and "lively-lifeless" where the differences were not significant.

In developing the RP scale with print ad ratings, Wells (1964b) found the items formed three factors which he labelled "attractiveness," "meaningfulness," and "vitality."<sup>10</sup> These might be interpreted as roughly corresponding to three variables discussed in attitude change research. In his review of research on this topic, McGuire (1969a, pp. 184-185) makes passing reference to the hard-soft sell notion in discussing different components of source and message variables. A possible way to describe the difference between the hard and soft sell approaches would be in terms of source "liking," "objectivity" (low suspicion of perceived intent to persuade), and "dynamism" or "intensity of delivery" which bear some resemblance to "attractiveness," "meaningfulness," and "vitality," respectively.<sup>11</sup> The items from the RP scale on which the two commercials did not differ significantly were both from the vitality factor. Based upon this post hoc interpretation then, one might conclude that the soft sell commercial was perceived as more attractive or better liked, and more meaningful or objective but equally vital or dynamic



compared to the hard sell message.

The experimental design employed was an "after-only with control." There were five groups involved in the experiment. One pair of groups heard either the hard sell or soft sell commercial once. A second pair were exposed to one or the other commercial twice. The fifth group served as a control and only completed the questionnaire. The sample size totalled across all five groups was 170.

In order to approximate natural radio listening conditions under which an audience member controls how closely he attends to commercials, we employed a masking technique which assured that a subject was exposed to the radio broadcast containing the commercial but did not force or direct his attention to it.<sup>12</sup> Two authentic radio newscasts were taped which also contained two genuine commercials. The experimental commercial was inserted into the tape so it appeared to be the lead-in commercial for the second newscast. On the day of the experiment, the classes were visited by the experimenter who informed subjects that he was embarking on a study of audience perception of political bias in radio newscasts and needed their help in getting a "feel" for the subject. Subjects were told that a tape would be played containing some newscasts, and after hearing it, they would be asked to fill out a short questionnaire. No mention was ever made of the commercials contained in the tape which appeared to be a natural part of the broadcast segment recorded. When the tapes had been played and the questionnaire completed, the experimenter thanked the class and left. The playing of the tape required about twelve minutes and the entire procedure took approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes. In the two exposure condition, the same experimenter returned two days after the first presentation and repeated the entire



procedure. This was done under the guise of checking to see whether or not perceptions of political bias in newscasts were stable.

Two days after exposure (first or second) data relating to the hypotheses were obtained via questionnaires. Measures were obtained only once for the repetition (two exposure) condition. Steps were taken to maintain the disguise attached to the original circumstances of the exposure and thereby to preserve subjects' naivete as to the true purpose of the experiment as long as possible. This was done by having subjects respond to a questionnaire allegedly concerned with college students' buying habits which asked various questions about several different products including shoe polish. The order in which the questions were asked was as follows: unaided brand and advertising awareness, brand preference, aided commercial recall, brand attitudes, and commercial recognition. Brand preference was measured by giving subjects a shopping list containing the names of several product categories including shoe polish and asking subjects to indicate which brand they would purchase. Sixteen semantic differential-type items were used to measure brand attitudes.

### Results

The main results may be summarized as follows. The first and third hypotheses above were strongly supported. Brand awareness, recall of the commercial, and brand preference were significantly greater for the hard sell commercial than for the soft sell approach. In regards to the second hypothesis, no differences were found between the control group and either of the two commercial treatment groups. Thus, it appeared that neither of the commercials had a measureable impact on subjects' attitudes toward the brand after a single exposure.

The effects of repetition changed the above picture considerably. In the case of brand awareness and advertising recall, the second ex-



posure significantly raised these measures over the levels achieved after a single exposure. However, the absolute magnitude of increases resulting from the second exposure tended to be greater for the soft sell commercial than for the hard sell version. After a second exposure, the hard sell commercial's initial advantage with respect to attention and remembering was still evident but had been reduced.

While repetition was found to have no statistically significant effect on brand attitude for either commercial, the trend of the data suggested that the incremental effect of the second exposure was positive for the soft sell commercial but negative for the hard sell presentation. The identical pattern of effects was evident in the brand preference data. For the soft sell commercial, repetition resulted in a statistically significant gain in brand preference, while no significant change occurred from one to two exposures for the hard sell commercial. Whereas the first exposure of the hard sell was found to have a greater impact on brand preference than was realized for the soft sell commercial, the difference disappeared after one additional exposure.

The fact that the hard sell approach with its seemingly built-in advantage with respect to attention value and memorability outperformed (with respect to brand preference) the soft sell on the first exposure suggest that at least initially there was no marked tendency for any negative affect aroused by the commercial to be transferred to the product. However, it would appear that repetition altered the response process. Although we emphasize it was only a non-significant, directional result, it appeared that repetition of the soft sell had a positive effect on brand attitudes, while repetition of the hard sell tended to affect attitudes adversely. With higher levels of repeat exposure, a more clear cut result





might have been obtained. Overall, these findings appear consistent with Krugman's (1961) hypothesis that soft sell copy holds up better with repetition than does the hard sell. Ray and Sawyer (1970, p. 27) also found some indication of this with their "grabber" and "non-grabber" print ads.

Perhaps then, as the proponents of the superiority-of-the-pleasant thesis have claimed, with repetition affective reactions toward advertising do tend to become associated with the advertised product. All this is a highly speculative interpretation of the results obtained here inasmuch as for none of the treatments were we able to detect a significant difference in brand attitudes between an exposed group and the control. Both commercials appeared capable of producing effects at the bottom (awareness and remembering) and top (brand preference) of the response hierarchy, but nothing in between at the attitudinal level. Ray and Sawyer (1970) found much the same thing in their more extensive repetition experiments. If repetition were operating here in a manner equivalent to the "reinstatement of the source" phenomenon found in attitude change research, then we would expect to find some differences in brand attitudes between the groups hearing the commercials and the control. Here, we observed only a hint of such differences developing after the second exposure. Some further insights into the underlying process might have been ascertained had immediate post-exposure measures of effect been obtained in addition to the delayed ones. The general subject of "post communication time trends in attitude change", to use McGuire's (1969, p. 252) terminology, deserves attention in future work and is relevant to a number of other problem areas in advertising, including copy testing, competitive effects, and media scheduling.

Another interpretation of these results would be to suggest that they merely constitute one further indication of the inadequacies of our



models and measures of hierarchical processes of response to advertising. Fishbein and Ajzen (1972, pp. 517-522) have recently criticized attitude change researchers for not paying careful enough attention to all stages in the attention-comprehension-acceptance process and suggested directions for improvement. Reformulated views of the processes mediating persuasion have been put forth by Greenwald (1968) and Leventhal (1970). In the advertising field, Bauer (1967), Krugman (1967) and Wright (1973) have all proposed alternative models of the response process which do not assume the simple type of instrumental learning underlying the traditional hierarchical model. Different conceptions and measures of the dependent variables merit consideration in carrying out additional work in this area.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper began by noting some questions that are frequently asked about what bearing the affective quality of advertising has on its effectiveness. Two seemingly different points of view regarding how liking and effectiveness are related were identified in the advertising literature. One position--the law of extremes hypothesis--holds that the relationship is curvilinear, while the other--the superiority-of-the-pleasant hypothesis--maintains it is a monotonic increasing one. The analysis presented here has attempted to pinpoint the critical points of conflict and also to suggest bases for reconciling differences. Thus we have argued that the answer to questions about the relationship between affect and effectiveness will differ according to how effectiveness is specified with respect to stage in the response hierarchy, frequency of exposure, and the time interval between exposure and measurement of effect.



Our review of the relatively small number of relevant empirical studies available revealed no pattern of consistent, unambiguous results. A failure to recognize explicitly the multidimensional nature of the independent variable (affect), the absence of measures of multiple response levels, and a general inattention to interactions tends to characterize most of the past work done in this area. Problems of internal validity also plague the typical design employed here which has been a correlational one, using measures aggregated over individuals for a cross-sectional sample of ads.

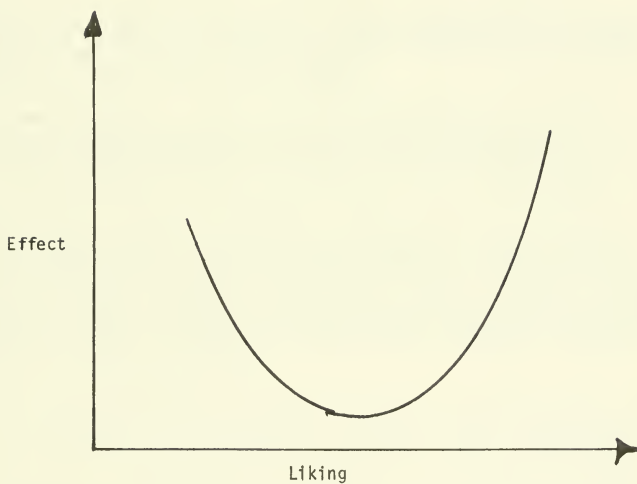
As has been proven to be the case in communications research generally, progress in this problem area is likely to be achieved by focusing less of effects per se and more on the conditions under which a particular kind of effect may occur. Given the nature of the problems and complexities discussed here, experimental studies are needed. Careful definition and manipulation of the independent variable in affect-effectiveness studies is problematic because of the difficulty of creating alternative messages that differ only in specified ways. Efforts should be made to build upon the work that has been done in defining the dimensions of consumers' perceptions of advertising stimuli and to attempt to relate such dimensions to relevant concepts and insights from the social psychological research on attitude change. Such connections can be highly useful in formulating hypotheses to be tested experimentally. Interactions involving delayed action and repetition effects deserve high priority.

The external validity of such experiments is likely to be limited. Hence, it would be highly desirable for such investigations to be done with the framework of Ray's (1969) concept of a "research system" in mind so as to lay a foundation for movement from highly controlled, laboratory conditions to more natural field settings. The work described in this paper represents an attempt to initiate work along these lines. Hopefully, it will be carried forward in the future.



Figure 1

## THE SCHWERIN LIKING-EFFECTIVENESS CURVE



Source: Redrawn from (Schwerin Research Corporation, 1955, p. 3).





## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>This figure has appeared in several advertising texts over the years. For a recent example, see (Hepner, 1964, p. 431).
- <sup>2</sup>According to information obtained by the authors from the Schwerin Research Corporation, no detailed report of the study's methods and results was ever published or otherwise made available generally.
- <sup>3</sup>The source most often cited here is, How To Get More Out of Your Radio Dollar, Schwerin Research Corporation, 1947. The authors have been unable to locate a copy of this document.
- <sup>4</sup>The appropriateness of the statistical methods employed in these studies is suspect, especially the practice of relying on post hoc rather than planned comparison tests. Capon and Hulbert (1973) provide a detailed critique of the design of these investigations.
- <sup>5</sup>Ray (1973, pp. 93-94) has advanced a learning theory explanation of the sleeper effect. He argues that a communication's source will be forgotten more rapidly than its content because the typical message is more redundant with respect to content than source. However, Kelman and Hovland's (1953) experiment (also see Watts and McGuire, 1964) indicated that the critical requirement for the sleeper effect was not respondents' ability to recall the source, but rather their spontaneous tendency to associate source with content.
- <sup>6</sup>See (Schwerin Research Corporation, 1959-60; or Buzzell and Kolin, 1964) for a description of the procedures and materials used in the tests.
- <sup>7</sup>No statistical test results were reported in (British Market Research Bureau, 1967) or (Treasure and Joyce, 1967) for either of the analyses summarized above.
- <sup>8</sup>Lucas and Benson employed the same definitions of positive and negative appeals here as those cited in the previous discussion of their work concerned with recall measures.
- <sup>9</sup>Wells originally developed these scales for use with print ads. Some minor changes were made in the wording of the items to make them suitable for eliciting ratings of radio commercials. At the time of the study, these scales were the only established instruments available for eliciting evaluations of advertising materials. More recently (Leavitt, 1970) and (Wells, Leavitt, and McConville (1971) have reported development of a reaction profile scale for television commercials. The factor structure of television commercials ratings appears to be much more complex than that for print ads.



- <sup>10</sup>Wells (1964b) notes that these correspond to the evaluative, potency, activity dimensions of Osgood's semantic differential.
- <sup>11</sup>The phrases "hard sell" and "soft sell" have been quite widely used both inside and outside advertising circles but never clearly defined. The only extended discussion of the two concepts known to the authors is that provided by Bursk (1947) in the context of personal selling.
- <sup>12</sup>Belson (1953) utilized a similar procedure to study the effects on recall of changing the position of radio commercials. Politz (1961) has disguised the intent of his magazine advertising readership studies in essentially the same way.



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